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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SARAJEVO 000552

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KCRM](#) [KJUS](#) [PINR](#) [EUN](#) [BK](#)
SUBJECT: BOSNIA: POLICE REFORM TALKS FALTER AS EC
COMMISSIONER VISIT LOOMS

REF: A. SARAJEVO 492

[1](#)B. SARAJEVO 456

[1](#)C. SARAJEVO 444

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Classified By: Ambassador Douglas L. McElhaney for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: The German Embassy March 6 hosted police reform negotiations with the leaders of eight major political parties in the hopes of facilitating agreement on police reform in anticipation of the March 16 visit of EU Commissioner for Enlargement Oli Rehn. Ambassadors from the US, Germany and the UK along with OHR Principal Deputy High Rep helped the meeting participants clarify contentious issues in order to reach a compromise. Party leaders appeared close to signing a statement giving their approval to the Police Reform Directorate (PRD) Final Report, with the understanding that discussions on local police areas would be held later. However, the talks broke down, hampered by discussion of the recent ICJ verdict, calls for assigning special district status to Srebrenica and Serb unwillingness to adopt the report without adding stipulations to guarantee the continued existence of the Republika Srpska (RS) police. RS Prime Minister (and SNSD President) Milorad Dodik backed away from his previously stated willingness to accept the PRD report, saying he would not accept the police reform package absent a guarantee the RS police would remain. We, Germany, UK, and OHR will engage in a series of bilateral meetings with the party leaders in the next few days to try to persuade party leaders to accept the PRD report. End Summary

[1](#)2. (U) The German Embassy March 6 hosted police reform negotiations with the leaders of eight major political parties in the hopes of facilitating agreement on police reform based on the PRD final report. The U.S., German, and UK Ambassadors, along with OHR PDHR attended the meeting with leaders of Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD), Party of Democratic Action (SDA), Party for BiH (SBiH), Serb Democrat Party (SDS), Croatian Democratic Union-1990 (HDZ-1990), Croatian Democratic Union BiH (HDZ-BiH), Social Democratic Party (SDP), and Party of Democratic Progress (PDP). We hoped to build on the progress toward consensus on the PRD report reached at a recent meeting with a smaller group of party leaders held in Banja Luka (Ref A). To this end we provided the meeting participants with a draft text of a joint statement intended to codify their acceptance of the PRD report.

International Ambassadors promote Consensus Building

13. (U) The German Ambassador reminded party leaders that the completion of a police reform agreement meant coming closer to the EU. Ambassador and PDHR (Gregorian) reminded party leaders that accepting the PRD report required compromise on all sides and said there was room to finalize details on local police bodies in a second phase of negotiations between initialing the SAA and signing it. The UK Ambassador noted that Commissioner Rehn was coming to Sarajevo in nine days and hoped to celebrate Bosnia's concrete progress toward Europe, but that would require a police reform agreement first. Ambassadors stated their desire to build on the March 1 talks in Banja Luka, at which some party leaders agreed to accept the PRD Final Report.

SNSD, Backed by PDP, shies away from Agreement

14. (U) Serb PDP President Ivanic asserted he could approve the PRD report if the question of internal police structures would be discussed later, but insisted that the other party leaders give him a guarantee that accepting the report did not automatically constitute agreement to abolish the RS police. Dodik insisted at first that he needed written language guaranteeing retention of the RS police in order to accept the report. Without such guarantees he said, he would not sign the joint statement accepting the report. Later, he asserted that he would reject all the state-level reforms in the PRD report unless the RS police was retained. He added that the RS National Assembly and the RS voters would support him in this. Serb SDS President Bosic refused to accept the PRD report, saying he disagreed with the methodology of the PRD and considered the report invalid. He commented on his surprise that SNSD and PDP were considering any compromise, as that went against the campaign promises they had made to the people of the RS.

SDP Hardline on Abolishing RS police

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15. (U) SDP President Zlatko Lagumdzija commented that since his party was not in government, -- there was no need for his approval, -- but added that he would not accept the PRD report. He asserted that he could not agree to any police reform that would leave open the possibility of retaining the RS police, as members of the RS police were cited in the recent ICJ verdict as having participated in the genocide committed in Srebrenica (Ref B). He also expressed concern that even if all parties accept the PRD report now and initial the SAA, he thought it unlikely the parties could reach agreement later on the organization of local police bodies.

Most Bosniak and Croat Parties Willing to Accept Report As Is

16. (U) SBiH President Haris Silajdzic said that although accepting the PRD report would mean a significant compromise for his party, he urged all present to accept the report as written so that the SAA could be initialed. SDA President Sulejman Tihic expressed his willingness to accept the report "with all its deficiencies" with the goal of fixing those gaps in later phases of police reform implementation. However, he made several divisive comments on the ICJ verdict and the situation in Srebrenica while also stating his view that in the end, the RS police must be abolished. The leaders of both Croat HDZ parties sought to promote consensus on accepting the report. HDZ-1990 President Ljubic asserted that the report provides a broad basis for future work on police reform implementation that will last five years, during which time we will be working on reaching agreement and public opinion will be changing in our constituencies.

Follow up Steps to Reach Consensus

¶7. (SBU) Despite last minute changes to the joint political statement in order to make it acceptable to all parties, Dodik, Bosic, Ivanic, and Lagumdziya refused to sign. The meeting ended when Dodik and Ivanic left to attend another meeting before returning to Banja Luka. In a continuing effort to promote a police reform agreement by March 16, Ambassador and his German and UK colleagues said they would privately engage Dodik to compromise. PDHR Gregorian plans to visit Dodik in Banja Luka in the next few days while also reaching out to other party leaders over the weekend.

Comment

¶8. (C) The police reform talks failed largely because Milorad Dodik backed away from his March 1 commitment to accept the PRD report. He may believe that he can secure further concessions from the EU by playing hardball. SDS's hardline and implicit threat to highlight Dodik's failure to honor one of his campaign promises, if he accepts the report, may also explain Dodik's about face. Unlike in some previous meetings, Silajdzic was constructive, as were the two Croat parties. Lagumdziya continued his party's tactic of putting the onus on Bosniak and Croat parties in government to cut unsavory deals with the RS on this and other issues. We will continue to press political leaders to reach consensus before Rehn's arrival on March 16, but Dodik and the political fall out from the ICJ verdict make meeting this deadline almost impossible. END COMMENT
MCELHANEY